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ABSTRACT

To improve learning and the work lives of teachers, in 1985 Massachusetts enacted Chapter 188, the Public School Improvement Act, which establishes and implements a system for testing and evaluating school and student performance. Since Chapter 188 was implemented, Massachusetts schools have improved faster than the national rate. Proposals for additional school improvements have been drafted by The Commission on the Conditions of Teaching to develop programs that build on Chapter 188. The Commission recommends the empowerment of the entire educational team, and the improvement of teachers' work lives. This can be done by establishing professional models called "Carnegie Schools," designed to accomplish the following: (1) restructure the teaching environment; (2) foster professional discretion, autonomy and accountability; (3) provide a variety of approaches to school organization, leadership, and governance; and (4) provide teachers with the support staff needed to be more effective and productive. The Improving School Performance Program (ISP) grants would fund schools whose performance levels are at the bottom quartile on state basic skills tests. The Commission also proposes the creation of a network of Professional Development Schools, in which new models of professional education are jointly designed and administered by school staff. Existing programs that should be further developed are the Minimum Salary Grants for teachers, and Horace Mann Programs and Lucretia Crocker Fellowships, which encourage and reward exemplary teachers. A list, with photographs, of Commission members is appended. (BJV)

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Leading The Way

REPORT OF

The Special Commission ON THE Conditions of Teaching

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In 1837, a distinguished member of both the Massachusetts House and Senate became the first Secretary of this state's (and America's first) department of education. His name was Horace Mann.

Today, one hundred and fifty years later, our legislative leadership continues in that great historic tradition of commitment to innovation and excellence in education.

For their dedicated support of the work of this commission and on behalf of the children of this commonwealth, we would like to thank Speaker of the House George Keverian, Senate President William M. Bulger, Representative Richard A. Voke, Chair of House Ways and Means, and Senator Patricia McGovern, Chair of Senate Ways and Means.

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Leading The Way

Report of The Special Commission on the Conditions of Teaching

Massachusetts State Legislature
August 1987

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Peter Vandermark Photography

Message from the Chairmen

Throughout our history — from our transition from agrarian to industrial society, through our assimilation of millions of immigrants, to our response to the challenge of Sputnik — our public education system has carried out its mandate: education for all Americans. In each succeeding generation, political leaders, educators, scientists and corporate executives have insisted that universal education was the prerequisite for a prosperous nation and that without successful public education the United States would not become or remain the pre-eminent industrial democracy in the world.

Profound concern about current public education is therefore understandable. Surveys, articles, commissions and reports paint a bleak picture of our public schools. The question then becomes what to do. Shall we find fault — students, teachers, television, family dislocation? Shall we wistfully hearken back to the way schools used to be and then give up? Blaming and complaining, however emotionally satisfying, will not confront the insistent issue: the future of our public schools. As in previous generations, the public schools are our future.

In 1985, Massachusetts stopped blaming, reminiscing and wishing. Instead of adding to the alarmist rhetoric and pessimistic doubt about public education, we acted. We began a program to improve learning and teaching. Fortunately, we began from a strong position. Massachusetts, by almost every index of student performance and teaching condition, ranks among the top states in the nation. But that is not good enough for the 21st century.

Our goal is to have the best educated population in the United States. By the year 2000, we want Massachusetts to have the most successful students and teachers in the nation.

The Public School Improvement Act of 1985

Two years ago Massachusetts faced the crucial challenge: the future of our students and teachers. Responding to this challenge, Massachusetts enacted Chapter 188, the Public School Improvement Act of 1985. The realities of 1985 and the auguries of the 21st century compelled us to act.

What We Did and Why

The background to Chapter 188 was our understanding of the essential role of education in American society. We recognized that a growing, prosperous economy and the preservation of our political institutions depended on the reform and strengthening of our public education system. America's economic growth was in jeopardy. Other societies had been generating the technology and industry to threaten our competitive edge in the world. To maintain and increase our standard of living required a literate and knowledgeable work force educated for an "information age." We also understood that our political institutions depended on an educated populace, an informed electorate able to participate in the decisions of government. We agreed with The National Commission on Excellence in Education when it asserted: "A high level of shared education is essential to a free, democratic society and to the fostering of a common culture, especially in a country that prides itself on pluralism and individual freedom." In sum, without rigorous education, our post-industrial democracy is a nation at risk.

The more immediate and pressing foreground, however, was our realization that Massachusetts' schools were not reaching their potential. The conditions of learning and teaching had to be improved. We needed a policy that would support and reward school improvement and educational achievement.

Through Chapter 188, now in its second year, we have responded, taking our first steps leading to excellence in learning and teaching. We are no longer uninvolved spectators and commentators; we have become dedicated participants in the drive to improve our schools. Chapter 188 has begun the renewal of Massachusetts education.

Specifically, we have established and implemented a system for the testing and evaluation of school and student performance. Data from curriculum assessment tests has permitted educators to assess and improve instruction in mathematics, science and reading; and information from basic skills tests has enabled teachers to identify and assist students needing remediation in reading, writing and mathematics. We also have acted to ensure equity of educational opportunity: to equalize fiscal resources among school districts, we have provided funds to communities where student performance might be constrained by school expenditures. Moreover, we have increased the parental and community involvement required to engender the deep, vigorous commitment necessary for a community to oversee and support its schools. In addition, the state has offered rewards and incentives for achieving schools and teachers.

Our method has been to challenge schools to do better. We want resources to follow results. We have introduced programs that would empower those most involved in school decisions — teachers, parents, and administrators — enjoining them to use their talent, energy and expertise to design and implement programs that would lead to school improvement, namely, student achievement and teacher professionalism.

The Accomplishments of Chapter 188

Massachusetts has begun to change education in a fundamental way. Our efforts are now focused on the school house — not the state house — and we are responding to the realities of unequal student achievement and increased teacher disenchantment. We have challenged our schools to do better; and school boards, parents, administrators, teachers and students have responded. As Massachusetts' schools complete their second full year of implementation of Chapter 188, we can already discern significant progress in meeting some of the bill's major objectives:

1) Statewide Curriculum Assessment and Basic Skills test results have now been published and disseminated, and for the first time parents, teachers, administrators and the public are able to make informed judgments about the relative performance of their community's schools.

2) With the targeted infusion of $161 million in Equal Educational Opportunity (EEO) grants since fiscal year '86, spending disparities between our wealthiest and poorest communities are beginning to narrow, and we have begun to improve educational opportunities for children in our lowest income communities.

3) School Improvement Councils made up of principals, parents, teachers and students are now functioning in nearly every school building and have begun to provide a structure for teacher empowerment and parent involvement, creating a climate of collegiality in which significant decisions about a school's future can be jointly determined. School Improvement Funds are being targeted to establish new programs, expand student services, purchase needed equipment and pay for other school-initiated projects.

4) The U.S. Secretary of Education, William Bennett, in his 1987 annual report on the nation's schools, singled out Massachusetts for significant achievement on the Scholastic Aptitude Test (SAT) and commended the Commonwealth for adopting Chapter 188 reforms to improve teacher quality and "to attract the most qualified candidates into teaching." Already there has been an increase in the number and quality of college students interested in a teaching career.

5) Thousands of Massachusetts educators have benefited from opportunities to design and implement programs which use and reward their expertise and creativity in their schools and districts (Horace Mann Teachers) or statewide (Lucretia Crocker and Leadership Academy Fellows).

6) With state assistance, 120 communities have now raised their minimum salary for entering teachers to $18,000, and 98% of Massachusetts teachers are now above the minimum. An additional $51 million has gone out in salary supplements and Professional Development Grants, reaching virtually every teacher in the Commonwealth.

7) Grants to support innovative approaches to early childhood education, basic skills development and dropout prevention have been made to some of our neediest communities, and new coalitions of educators, human service workers, and other community agency leaders are working together to attack these problems.

8) Since Chapter 188, Massachusetts' schools have improved faster than the national rate.

9) Proposals for additional school improvement have been drafted by the two Commissions mandated to develop programs to build on Chapter 188: The Commission on the Conditions of Teaching and The Commission on REACH and School Improvement Councils.

Chapter 188 has initiated the state's drive to improve the education of its students and the status of its teachers. We have instituted for the first time the annual use of standardized tests to assess student and school performance; committed ourselves to school-

Teachers' Retirement Board, Age and Service Table, Active Members

level decision-making; acknowledged the state's responsibility to address unequal educational opportunity in a unique context; and given support and recognition to our teachers. In sum, Chapter 188 has generated a new climate for educational reform in Massachusetts, and creative new energies have been released in hundreds of schools across the Commonwealth.

What We Learned

Chapter 188 also educated us. In evaluating its performance we learned:
1) The school building and its classrooms must be the locus of reform; the school house, not the State House, must produce educational improvement.
2) There still remains a well of untapped energy in each school community — interested individuals within and outside of each school whose involvement is essential for continued improvement.
3) Improvement occurs in schools where administrators expect professional expertise from teachers, and then support teachers for independent decision-making.
4) Students are still not getting a fair shake in some schools — not necessarily low-spending schools, but nevertheless low-achieving schools.
5) Money should be targeted for specific programs to encourage and support creative ideas and leadership at the school building level.
6) School personnel are held responsible for educational progress, or its lack thereof. Improving schools deserve increasing support.

In its first two years, Chapter 188 instituted fundamental reforms in our public schools. It was a beginning, the first step of long-term educational renewal in our schools. The next stage is crucial. It is in this phase that we propose to connect investment to improvement, accountability to reward, teacher professionalization to student achievement.

What Is Next

The Special Commission on the Conditions of Teaching recommends that we extend the initial results of Chapter 188 to refine and strengthen some of the bill's key provisions and to address issues that were unanticipated in the first phase of reform. The Commission proposes to:

- empower the entire educational team, believing that increased involvement by teachers, administrators, parents, students and the community will improve school achievement.
- provide dramatic incentives to schools to improve their students' academic performance, substantially rewarding schools and their staffs for meeting educational goals.
- ensure that all students, regardless of economic background, have the opportunity to gain the knowledge and skills critical to success over the next decade and into the 21st Century.
- discover if the self-governing school will be the successful school, if the autonomous and rewarded teacher will be the better teacher.

It is through this second phase of reform that we seek to move closer to our vision of schools as productive, satisfying environments where teachers are revered and rewarded for their art and knowledge and where students reach their full intellectual potential.

Nicholas A. Paleologos
House Co-Chairman

Richard A. Kraus
Senate Co-Chairman

August 24, 1987

Empowerment + Accountability = Achievement

Chapter 188 began our quest for successful schools. It initiated our program to help students and teachers reach their full potential. Through its many provisions it offered our schools, communities and educators empowerment and support, and it expected their involvement and accountability. For example, School Improvement Councils, composed of teachers and parents, received grants to plan and implement ways to enhance school performance. Minimum salary grants addressed low teacher salaries; Lucretia Crocker and Horace Mann grants gave teachers funds to share and implement innovative educational programs. Basic Skills and Curriculum Assessment tests evaluated the basic knowledge and skills of our students. Equal Opportunity Grants sought to equalize spending as a means to equalize achievement.

The Commission on the Conditions of Teaching has examined the success of Chapter 188, and we propose new initiatives to improve the conditions of teaching and learning. We seek more empowerment and support for teachers; and more involvement and accountability for schools.

The Professionalization of Teaching: Autonomy, Accountability and Esteem

In order to improve the achievement of our learners, we must improve the work lives of their teachers.

Unlike other professionals, many teachers lack autonomy and esteem. Although trained to guide their student's learning, teachers — individually and collectively — are seldom treated like educated professionals: they rarely determine what is to be done and how; they rarely monitor themselves through collegial relationships based on expertise and experience; their will is usually superseded by the authority of supervisors; and they often may not make the very educational decisions for which the public now holds them accountable. Given the frustrating conditions in which teachers work, it is amazing that they have accomplished as much as they have.

As the Carnegie Report, *A Nation Prepared: Teachers for the 21st Century*, states:

> Teachers work in an environment suffused with bureaucracy. Rules made by others govern their behavior at every turn. Perceptive researchers have told us for years that teachers are treated as if they have no experience worth having. The text and the scope and sequence of the curriculum define in detail what they are supposed to teach. Decisions made by curriculum supervisors, teacher training experts, outside consultants and authors of teachers' guides determine how a teacher is to teach. Teachers who choose to work together as professional colleagues must constantly fight the natural tendencies of a system based on very different principles. And an endless array of policies succeed in constraining the exercise of the teacher's independent judgment on almost every matter of moment.

If we expect college graduates to enter teaching and our schools to become healthy learning communities, the conditions of teaching must change. If we expect our students to become critical and creative thinkers, we must encourage and reward these intellectual virtues in their teachers. To do this, we must provide incentives for autonomy and collegiality and thereby reform the governance of our schools so that our teachers can function as professionals and our schools be held accountable for the progress of their students. Salaries and self-governance must become commensurate with expertise, professional judgment and commitment. For learning to succeed, the teaching profession must succeed.

Rethinking How Schools Function

The number of people who want to become teachers is below that of a few years ago[2], and few parents would encourage their children to enter the profession. This attitude toward the teaching profession results from several factors, not the least of which are teacher salaries and increased professional opportunities for women. One major factor teachers identify as most debilitating to them personally and most damaging to their profession is the increasing bureaucratization of schools: teachers and principals make fewer and fewer decisions. Increasingly, school faculties report that they no longer understand the overall goals of their system or how implementing a particular directive pushes their school toward any goal.

During the past fifteen years, the school as a work place has changed dramatically. Changes in society have presented schools with students who have more than traditional academic needs. A teacher must routinely work with "at risk" children whose intense needs have gone unmet at home. This classroom situation puts great pressures on the professional school staff. Added to these increasing demands in the classroom, teachers spend an inordinate amount of time in non-teaching duties — at the expense of planning and teaching. These duties include corridor duty, restroom duty, lunch duty, bus duty, study hall supervision, not to mention the many clerical duties teachers must assume.

Finally, teachers currently work in isolated environments. They spend almost all of their time solely with students and rarely have the opportunity to develop collegial relationships through observing other teachers, discussing school problems, planning curriculum, and sharing their professional knowledge and skills.

Today's schools cannot meet the educational demands of tomorrow's society. Nor are they places in which professionals will want to work. In the schools of the future, professionals must have a better understanding of school goals: they must participate in identifying goals, mutually arrive at methods to achieve them, and candidly evaluate their own progress. The school decision-making structure must be substantially less bureaucratic; it must encourage professionals to shape the way school goals are reached. Teachers must work together to make curriculum decisions and sharpen their teaching skills. The responsibility for the effectiveness of a school — for school outcomes and student performance — can then be shared equally by teachers and administrators who work together to name and reach their school's objectives.

[2]Report on the Status of Teacher Supply and Demand in Massachusetts. Massachusetts Institute for Social and Economic Research, 1987.

The Establishment and Purpose of Carnegie Schools

To enable our future public schools to approach this vision, the Commission recommends the establishment of professional models which we designate "Carnegie Schools." The purposes of these schools, described by the Carnegie Commission as the ideal environment for our teachers, are fourfold:

1) to restructure the environment for teaching, freeing teachers to decide how best to meet state and local goals for children.

2) to foster professional discretion, autonomy and accountability by first providing teachers with opportunities to participate in the setting of goals for their schools and then evaluating the success of schools in achieving these agreed-upon standards of performance.

3) to provide a variety of approaches to school organization, leadership and governance.

4) to provide teachers with the support staff needed to be more effective and productive.

The Commission believes that the atmosphere in which it is easiest to teach is the atmosphere in which it is easiest to learn. The Carnegie School program encourages schools to develop new forms of organization, leadership and governance to improve the teaching and learning climate within schools. The Massachusetts' Carnegie Schools will provide support to public schools and public school teachers in the Commonwealth to develop creative models of school organization and governance which restructure the environment for teaching, freeing teachers to decide how best to meet state and local goals for children while holding schools accountable for student progress. Carnegie School plans must change governance in order to impact the professional life of a teacher, including, but not limited to, setting school goals, involvement in decision making, innovative staffing structures, extended day and year programs, or team teaching.

If the citizens of this Commonwealth want the public schools of the 21st century to function effectively to preserve American society, they must make a commitment to public education. They must support the revitalization of our educational institutions. In making our Carnegie School recommendation, this Commission believes that Massachusetts can lead the nation in instituting and encouraging change within our educational system — as it has done so often in the past. To restructure the public school system from the factory model to the professional model requires the willingness of educators and community leaders to develop various models of school leadership and governance. This is a willingness that this Commission believes Massachusetts is ready to support.

Carnegie School Guidelines

The Commission proposes the following guidelines for Carnegie Schools:

- Grants will be available for schools and communities to develop plans to significantly restructure school organization and/or governance to improve the environment for teaching and learning. Grants will be multi-year, reflecting the time it takes to effect creative change. All schools are eligible to apply; schools will be selected by the Department of Education through a competitive process.
- The intention of the Carnegie School grant program is to encourage teachers and principals to think creatively about the organization of their school. Individual plans for restructuring schools may include requests for temporary waivers of regulations, local school policies, or contractual provisions which, in the eyes of the school building professionals, inhibit improvement.
- The Carnegie School plan will be developed by a team of teachers, administrators, parents and other interested community members. Throughout the development of the initial Carnegie plan, the team will be expected to consult with the School Improvement Council, local unions, school committee, administrators, and others who may wish to contribute to the plan.
- The initial plan must include specific changes in school governance and organization which will positively affect the school environment. For instance, plans might address increased teacher involvement: in the selection, structuring and evaluation of staff; the organization of the school day and year; the assignment of students; the selection of textbooks; or changes in curriculum. Initial plans must contain a list of measurable goals which can be used to indicate whether satisfactory progress is being made in meeting the stated goals and objectives of the plan.
- Once the Carnegie School plan is developed by the team, the staff of the school must be given the opportunity to sign the plan to indicate their commitment. Waivers must be requested of any organization or agency whose policies, procedures, regulations or collective bargaining provisions would be violated by changes proposed in the plan. If a waiver request is denied, the team should try to modify the plan to accommodate the concern.
- Upon school committee approval, the initial Carnegie School plan application shall be sent to the Department of Education. The Department shall encourage the submission of plans which reflect evidence of strong local commitment and cooperation among involved parties. The Department may not approve a plan for which a waiver is needed but has not been granted.

■ The Department of Education will develop a technical assistance cadre of Massachusetts educators experienced in the dynamics of school change to help Carnegie Schools plan and implement their reforms. These educators will serve on an "as requested" basis depending on their expertise and availability. The Department will establish the criteria for such Carnegie School facilitators.
■ Grants will be provided in two stages.
– In fiscal year 1988, planning and development grants will be provided to schools with Department of Education approved plans.
– In fiscal year 1989, implementation grants will be provided.

Carnegie Schools will develop professional teachers who are involved in and accountable for the success of their students. These Carnegie Schools will operate on the principle that the essential resource for improved education is already inside the school: determined, intelligent and capable teachers. By recognizing their expertise and commitment, we will allow teachers, working together, the freedom to exercise their professional judgment to determine the best way to carry out their basic mission — educating students. In light of the increased demands on our educational system, it is more crucial now than ever before to make the very best use of our teaching talent. Carnegie Schools will be model schools of student achievement and teacher satisfaction, powerful examples of how to improve education and professionalize teaching.

Improving School Performance

Educational improvement also means attention to children at risk: those students who are in public schools with low achievement results and high drop-out rates. Lacking direct data on student achievement, the Educational Improvement Act of 1985 hypothesized that low spending was a critical variable explaining the unsatisfactory performance of unsuccessful schools, and therefore that Chapter 188 needed to assist schools whose per-pupil expenditures were below the state-wide average. Acting on this hypothesis, Equal Educational Opportunity (EEO) Grants were offered to school districts spending less than 85 percent of the state average; and Essential Skills Grants were targeted for less affluent schools that demonstrated a need for remediation and drop-out prevention programs.

With the publication of the results of the first statewide curriculum assessment and basic skills tests conducted under Chapter 188, however, we have fresh evidence that there is no necessary or automatic correlation between educational spending and educational results. While schools in wealthy communities generally perform better than those in poor communities, there are heartening examples of schools that achieve high performance with relatively low expenditures, and disheartening examples of schools that achieve poor educational results with very substantial per pupil expenditures.

The link between expenditures and results in education is obviously a complex one, and we are not suggesting that the problems of low-performing schools can be solved without money. If one looks at the two hundred lowest performing elementary schools in the Commonwealth, as measured by the basic skills test, it is clear that most, but not all, are low-spending schools. But, virtually all are schools with high percentages of children from low-income families, are disproportionately Black and Hispanic, and are disproportionately concentrated in our largest and poorest cities.

We believe that school achievement relies as much on leadership, community involvement and school decision-making as on formulas for school spending. Moreover, we believe that the decisions made by a school's professionals and its interested citizens — those most directly affected and accountable — will do more to improve a low-achieving school than fiats and regulations from those less-familiar and less-involved with the school's performance.

If the achievement of students in these schools is going to be brought closer to the statewide average, it will also require a sustained strategy of external support engaging a wide network of other community agencies working with the schools, and will almost certainly require a substantial increase in public expenditures. But new dollars without a coherent plan for improvement, without a new coalition between the school and key community organizations, and without a commitment to measurable educational results, are unlikely to produce improved educational performance.

A new program for students at risk should therefore involve those individuals who are responsible for making education work — parents, teachers, school committees, school superintendents and other interested community leaders. We must give low-achieving schools the capacity to formulate their own school-based plans which can specifically address those elements of the conditions of teaching and learning which perpetuate poor student performance.

We therefore recommend that, beginning in fiscal year 1989, the EEO program will be capped at its current (FY 88) expenditure levels and a new grants program for individual schools be instituted using educational achievement rather than expenditures as the chief criterion for eligibility. This program will require strong collaboration between schools, colleges, businesses, human service agencies, and other community agencies in the design and implementation of school-wide improvement plans.

The Improving School Performance Program

The Improving School Performance Program (ISP) links state expenditures to school improvement and community involvement. To bring these lowest-achieving schools up to par with the other schools in the Commonwealth that are doing comparatively well, we challenge these schools to develop and implement school-based plans that will address unacceptable student performance. Such school-based plans will earn and deserve our support and investment.

Initially, those elementary and middle schools which are designated as "most-at-risk" (i.e., those schools whose performance levels are in the bottom quartile on state basic skills tests) will be encouraged to generate a school-based plan of improvement. The plan may use various methods to reach its goal of school improvement and increased learning. It is to be developed for a 5-year period, with timelines indicating when specific goals will be met.

Having the experience of two statewide testing programs (Curriculum Assessment and Basic Skills) behind us, we can identify those schools in which student learning is poorest. In the worst situations, 3/4 of the students were unable to pass all three parts of the basic skills test. These lowest-achieving schools (K-8) may face a particularly difficult challenge in developing and implementing improvement plans. In recognition of this reality, we propose to concentrate extra resources and attention on these schools.

School plan development will be the responsibility of the School Improvement Council, whose membership will be expanded to include representation from relevant community organizations, agencies and other interested citizens. A primary mission for the expanded School Improvement Council is to look outside the school to explicitly identify deleterious influences on student performance: the interfering concerns and constraints the child brings to school — those community problems that a plan will have to address and counteract to be successful.

Each school's plan will include programs for strengthening its academic programs, providing increased basic skills remediation, improving counseling and other support services, and developing alternative educational options. The school plan must indicate how the school will coordinate ISP funded services with other state and federally-funded programs, especially those designed to provide services that are crucial to the long-term educational and economic health of poor children and their families, e.g., programs in early childhood, teen parenting, adult literacy, job training. The school's plan must also indicate the role that each participating organization will play in helping the school meet its annual improvement goals, and the in-kind resources it will commit to that effort.

Plans will be developed at the school building level, by the expanded School Improvement Council. Once the plan is developed by the Council, the staff of the school must be given the opportunity to sign the plan to indicate their commitment. The school superintendent will then submit the plan to the school committee for approval.

Upon school committee approval, the plan application shall be sent to the Department of Education. The Department shall encourage the submission of plans which reflect evidence of strong local commitment and cooperation between involved parties.

We also believe a summer program is a key component of each plan. Special funding will be available through the ISP program for schools that wish to initiate or expand a summer program. There is substantial evidence that low-achieving students lose ground when they are not in school. A well-designed academic skill-building program in the summer can help narrow the achievement gap for such students.

To help address these problems, we will offer "at-risk" schools additional funds to hire teachers, administrators and other support personnel — some of whom shall, if available, come from schools outside the district — to do two things: 1) run a summer enrichment program; and 2) lend their professional expertise to developing and implementing the plan. In addition, we will offer funds to hire local secondary school students to help as peer tutors in the summer program.

ISP *Grants*

In fiscal year 1988, planning money will be provided to low-performing schools that indicate a willingness to develop a comprehensive school-wide improvement plan. Funds will be directly earmarked for the school to which they have been designated, and their expenditures must be approved by the local school committee. The School Improvement Council will be expected to begin developing a plan which will incorporate a needs-based strategy to improve student achievement. Additional money will be provided for schools which institute a summer program.

In fiscal year 1989, funding will be provided for implementation grants to schools with approved plans. For the next two years, grants will depend on successful implementation of the plan. Additional funds thereafter will be available only on the basis of demonstrated improvements in student learning.

In order to remain eligible for these grants, a community must continue to use its fiscal resources to insure that (1) the proportion of its total resources spent on education remains constant or increases and (2) targeted ISP schools continue to receive the same per-pupil expenditures from the community's educational budget as non-ISP schools within the community.

This program — like teacher grants, Carnegie Schools and Professional Development Schools — is another component in our quest for student and teacher success. In this component, we are investing in those low-achieving schools that indicate the courage, will and capacity to address and redress their serious pupil-performance problems. By focusing on these lowest-achieving schools, we are seeking an equalization of educational achievement as well as opportunity. Through the Improving School Performance program we will focus on how much a child has learned, not on how much a community has spent.

Photo courtesy of Lesley College

Professional Development Schools

Although the Commission has not been charged with the responsibility for rethinking the way teachers are inducted into the profession, we believe that our public schools must play a more significant role in the pre-service and in-service education of our teachers. Consequently, we are proposing the creation of a grants program to support the creation of a network of "Professional Development Schools" throughout the Commonwealth. We are recommending the establishment of such Schools, in which new models of professional education are jointly designed and administered by school and college staff, in order to strengthen the role played by school-based professionals in both the initial training of prospective or new teachers and in the on-going development of experienced teachers. In addition, Professional Development Schools should ultimately forge a new partnership between schools and colleges in the operation of teacher education programs.

These Schools will be especially staffed and structured to be model sites for professional development. A school chosen as a "Professional Development School" should be demonstrably effective with its students, as measured by such indicators as student achievement, student attendance, the performance of its graduates, and student suspension and vandalism rates. It should also have an exemplary school climate or culture, as measured by such indicators as teacher involvement in decision-making, openness to experimentation and new ideas, evidence of collegiality, and faculty attendance and turnover rates. Moreover, it should be a school in which one or more higher education institutions agree to work collaboratively with the faculty to design and implement training programs for new and experienced teachers at the site. And finally, it should be a school that is willing to allow teams of teachers from other schools to observe and participate in its faculty development programs.

The Commission recommends a grants program to enable the Board of Education to initially select 8-12 Professional Development Schools dispersed geographically throughout the Commonwealth. Based on the criteria described above, the Board would invite colleges and school systems to nominate schools for this program (self-nomination is also possible). After an initial screening, an invitational conference would be held for teams of teachers and administrators representing each school and its higher education partner(s) that have met the Board's criteria. School and college teams would then be invited to submit a three-year plan for becoming a Professional Development School. The plan would require the approval of the school faculty and administration, the local teacher organization, the district superintendent, the local school committee, and the participating college's administrative and faculty leadership. Those schools selected for funding would receive six-month grants to support more detailed planning and staff orientation; upon completion and approval of these detailed plans, Professional Development Schools will receive annual operating grants for the next three years.

Development grants will fund programs designed to enhance teacher collegiality, knowledge and training. Each School, depending on its particular mix of pre-service and in-service programs, would use its grant funds differently. Activities might include: 1) the creation of clinical professorships and other new roles that would allow the most demonstrably effective teachers to spend a portion of their time working with prospective, novice or experienced teachers assisting and monitoring their self-growth; 2) the development of specific training modules and materials for various trainee populations; and 3) the training of a cadre of experienced substitute teachers who could serve as replacement teachers for others in the building (or system) who were being freed to participate in professional development activities. These examples are meant to be illustrative, not exhaustive. Participating colleges could have some of their special costs covered out of grant funds, but would also be expected to contribute in-kind services to this project.

The primary outcome of the Professional Development School program will be the establishment over the next three years of a network of exemplary schools where substantial numbers of prospective teachers, beginning teachers, and mid-career teachers would receive high-quality training under the supervision of some of the Commonwealth's most able and experienced teachers. A secondary outcome will be the establishment of stronger partnerships between school professionals and college faculty in the designing and implementation of teachers' education and professional development programs.

Building On Our Base: Recognizing and Rewarding Professionals

Chapter 188 has demonstrated the Commonwealth's commitment to its teachers. Seeking to make teaching salaries more attractive and competitive relative to other professions, we have established Minimum Salary Grants to raise the minimum salary in Massachusetts' school districts. Understanding that dedicated teachers need to be challenged and supported, we have instituted the Horace Mann and Lucretia Crocker grants to encourage and reward teachers who have generated innovative and exemplary programs which have contributed to the growth of their students and profession.

The Commission recognizes the success of these Chapter 188 programs. Teacher salaries are higher, and there now exist grant programs which offer incentives to excellence. Teachers are now stimulated to develop and implement creative approaches to learning, and their expertise and artistry is being acknowledged. By offering these grants we have affirmed the professional status of teachers, recognizing their knowledge and training. Moreover, we have established that these exemplary programs, which have been successfully tested, are to be shared and replicated. But there are still ways to further enhance these programs.

Minimum Salary Grants

Wishing to affirm Massachusetts' resolve to make teacher pay comparable to other professions, the Commission proposes to offer salary grants to school districts to raise their minimum salary to $20,000. School districts in which teachers make less than $18,000 will still be eligible for grants to raise the minimum salary to either $18,000 or $20,000. The Commission recommends that this grant program stay in effect in FY 88 and FY 89. Both salary grants remain contingent on the district agreeing to retain the higher salaries after July 1, 1989.

Horace Mann Programs

Horace Mann teacher grants are distributed to school districts to compensate teachers who undertake new roles and expanded responsibilities. To further motivate school improvement and because the Horace Mann program has been extremely successful, the Commission recommends that, beginning in FY 89, the number of teachers who are eligible for Horace Mann grants be increased from 6% to 10%. These grants allow communities to improve utilization of teaching resources and provide financial incentives for teachers to develop professionally.

Lucretia Crocker Fellowships

To focus on the need to replicate innovative, successful ways to teach basic skills, the Commission recommends that a minimum of one-third of the programs designated "exemplary educational programs" for dissemination and replication provide for creative and tested ways to improve these skills. We further propose that upon completion of the Lucretia Crocker sabbatical year, wherein a fellow's exemplary program has been disseminated to other schools and teachers, each Lucretia Crocker fellow may become a member of the Lucretia Crocker Foundation. This Foundation will offer grants so that members can continue to provide technical assistance to schools and participate in other professional development activities. Finally, we propose that the advisory council established to oversee implementation of the Lucretia Crocker program be expanded to include five teachers from Massachusetts' public schools, in addition to the five deans of graduate schools of education currently on the council.

Afterword

We expect Massachusetts' schools to excel — this is our goal.

We have a clear vision of excellence in education. We see it in schools that produce literate and creative students with the knowledge and self-confidence to contribute to our economy and democracy. We recognize it in enthusiastic, dedicated teachers who seek challenges and responsibility, proud that their judgment and expertise is appreciated and rewarded. We find it in communities committed to their schools, where parents and citizens invest their energies and hopes, determined that their children reach their full potential.

To ensure that all of our schools approach this vision, Massachusetts has adopted the School Improvement Act of 1985 which expresses our commitment to achievement in education. But Chapter 188 must be strengthened if our schools — and all those involved in education — are to excel. It is with this goal that the Special Commission on the Conditions of Teaching has examined our schools and drafted our recommendations.

To improve the work life of teachers, returning initiative, responsibility and esteem to their profession, we have proposed programs wherein school staffs can plan and implement their approach to school excellence, motivating teachers to collegially determine the destiny of their school and students. To stimulate student improvement in low-achieving schools we have asserted that the staff, parents and concerned community of these schools need to form cohesive, committed organizations determined to improve the education of their children. To encourage schools to establish their own educational priorities we have proposed strategies and programs whereby schools can decide how best to improve the education of their students; and we have indicated how the state will support and reward schools that show demonstrable improvement.

At the end of *A Nation Prepared*, the Carnegie Task Force on Teaching as a Profession concludes, "It is time to assert a renewed education agenda in the states. In particular we are looking for a few states to lead the way in rethinking the way schools work." Massachusetts has its education agenda. We have our vision of how excellent schools work. It is time to lead the way.

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